

Overview and Status Report
National Aging Program Information System – State Reporting Tool Project (NAPIS SRT)
and
Program Information Systems Management Study

September 29, 2004

Purpose of the NAPIS SRT Project

The U.S. Administration on Aging (AoA) has funded the National Association of State Units on Aging (NASUA) under a cooperative agreement to develop a database software product for use by State Agencies on Aging (SUAs) in reporting under Title III of the Older Americans Act. The product (NAPIS SRT) is intended to facilitate the transmission of the revised State Program Report (SPR) in a timely manner from SUAs to AoA. (Note: The NAPIS SRT is being developed for use by SUAs. Future developments may be applicable to other entities, e.g., Area Agencies on Aging.)

The SPR revision was initiated to accomplish three primary tasks:

- Reduce SUA reporting burden, i.e., client detail information, system edits, validity checks and requirements for transmission.
- Incorporate required information regarding the National Family Caregiver Support Program, and
- Implement the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) guidelines regarding reporting classifications for race and ethnicity.

As a result of these changes, previous data transmission and system edits or validity software (SVerify and SPERDIA) will no longer be applicable to the revised SPR. The NAPIS SRT will perform these functions for the transmission of FY 2005 data. Based on a competitive solicitation, Synergy Software Technologies, Inc. was awarded the contract to develop the NAPIS SRT software.

Accomplishments to Date

To date, a number of project tasks have been accomplished and progress has begun on the development of the NAPIS SRT. Accomplishments include:

1. A survey of SUAs completed by Synergy to determine the scope of state NAPIS reporting systems.
2. A Project Advisory Committee (AR, CA, MI, NV, NY, RI, SC, and WI) was formed. Monthly teleconferences are conducted to provide input and guidance to the project.
3. As a result of recommendations from the Project Advisory Committee, states will be given the option of using either XML or DBF for file transfer of NAPIS data from the state system to the NAPIS SRT.
4. Synergy has produced a number of deliverables (see attached) required for the NAPIS SRT project. Until these products have been through the planned pilot testing, they should be considered drafts. These drafts include:
 - NAPIS SRT System Design document (high level process flow, screen shots, system concepts),
 - Underlying database design for the SRT system, and
 - XML Import specifications.
5. Development of the NAPIS SRT has begun. The beta test version will be distributed to the pilot states by October 31, 2004.

SUAs will use the XML specifications to develop the protocols necessary to transmit NAPIS data from their data system to the NAPIS SRT. The NAPIS SRT (available to SUAs in either a web based or locally installed version) will function to conduct the system edit and validity checks, and transmit the NAPIS information to AoA. SUAs may find it useful to share these draft specifications with the information technology entity that will be responsible for this development. AoA will very shortly post the XML specifications on its web site.

Timeline for further Product Development

8/1/04 – 11/1/04:	Development of database and application.
11/1/04 – 11/30/04:	Pilot testing ¹ and development of DBF import specifications.
12/1/04 – 12/30/04:	Incorporate changes from pilot testing into NAPIS SRT. Establish XML import functionality.
12/31/04:	Product Rollout and dissemination of DBF specifications to create import functions
1/1/05:	Initiate training on NAPIS SRT and develop DBF import functionality.
2/1/05:	Release new version of NAPIS SRT with DBF import functionality.

Validity Checks

Three increasing levels of validity checks will be developed for the NAPIS SRT. The NAPIS SRT will check the NAPIS/SPR at the following levels:

- Field by field
- Sheet by sheet
- Full report

Completeness of Data

Discussions with the Advisory Committee indicate that some SUA data systems may not yet be prepared to provide the client detail necessary for this level of review. (Note: The NAPIS SRT is not a client tracking system.) To accommodate the current range of data systems, the NAPIS SRT will:

1. Review all State Program Reports before transmittal to AoA,
2. Flag any discrepancies or missing data elements for the SUA,
3. Flag any discrepancies or missing data elements for AoA, and
4. Allow the transmittal of the SPR to AoA once the missing data is flagged.

Tasks to be Completed

1. Training and Technical Support – Web based training and technical support will be provided to all SUAs on the installation and /or access to web based software and set-up procedures.
2. Report Module – With the direction of the Project Advisory Committee, Synergy will develop, test and disseminate a series of custom reports on NAPIS data, e.g. comparison of year-to-year NAPIS data.
3. Additional technical support – The initial technical support will be focused on software installation and operations. On-going technical support will focus on the using the custom report module, XML and dbf processes.
4. Re-training – Web based instruction will be made available to individual SUAs to address software revisions, re-training of new staff due to turnover in state staff responsibilities, etc.

¹ To insure product rollout by the end of the calendar year, project timeframes have been compressed. The initial pilot testing plan was to encompass three months of testing, feedback and re-testing. The current plan is to have the testing completed in one month (November 2004). Feedback and any additional product design changes will occur during December 2004. Three SUAs (Iowa, South Carolina and Vermont) have volunteered to pilot test the NAPIS SRT.

Overview - Program Information Systems Management Study

The focus of work with the U.S. Administration on Aging during the second year of the NAPIS cooperative agreement has been expanded with the implementation of a major new component - a Management Study of Data Collection and Reporting. The proposed study is intended to identify ways for AoA, SUAs and AAAs to improve the efficiency and to reduce the burden of information collection across the network. The study will identify cost-effective ways to:

- 1) Define common and crosscutting data requirements so as to limit Federal requirements to a subset of State and local requirements;
- 2) Eliminate the need for elderly individuals and caregivers to provide identifying information repeatedly to various service providers;
- 3) Eliminate data collection methods and systems that prevent or hinder obtaining unduplicated counts of individuals served across providers; and
- 4) Take advantage network economies of scale for information systems development and management without compromising competition in the marketplace.

With the initial release of the NAPIS/SPR reporting requirements in 1994, State Units on Aging (SUA), Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) and provider agencies were significantly challenged in their ability to develop statewide comprehensive client tracking systems. The intent of the proposed Program Information Systems Management Study is to identify and learn more about current models of data and information reporting and to develop recommendations on how system standards can be established. A Policy Advisory Committee will be formed comprised of SUAs and AAAs to provide guidance throughout this study.

A solicitation of proposals was used to select Westat as the contractor for the Management Study. Under this project, Westat will:

1. Conduct a Management Study, including cost estimates, for the development of reporting system standards and specifications to assist SUAs and AAAs with unified SPR data collection and transmission from the AAA to the SUA (as a part of the Management Study, the contractor will conduct a survey to ascertain the degree to which the systems which collect and compile SPR and related data meet the information needs of SUAs and AAAs);
2. Offer cost estimates for the development and maintenance of a single user system for SUAs and AAAs;
3. Offer cost estimates (for SUAs and AAAs) of developing, updating and maintaining the current data and information systems;
4. Identify and analyze the efficacy and efficiency of data and information systems used by SUAs and AAAs to comply with NAPIS/SPR requirements;
5. Produce written studies of up to five successful models, identifying keys to success and any significant challenges and providing adequate details to analyze for possible replication or expansion of such models, where not prohibited due to proprietary ownership or copyright; and
6. Recommend systematic approaches to obtaining optimal data and information. The Management Study Report will include recommendations concerning technical and cost implications of:
 - (A) Changes to the NAPIS/SPR so as to limit Federal requirements to a subset of State and local requirements to support management decision-making and state and local initiatives (including advocacy);
 - (B) Software/hardware considerations for SUAs and AAAs;
 - (C) Management reports for SUAs and AAAs;

- (D) Methods to reduce data entry burdens,
- (E) Methods to eliminate duplicated counts of individuals served across service providers and geographic locations;
- (F) Methods to eliminate the need for elders to provide identifying information to multiple service providers; and,
- (G) Training and technical support needs of SUAs and AAAs.

This project is to be completed by September 2005. Additional updates will be provided as the project proceeds.